

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY

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FOR JURICH AND SMITH

FOLLOWING REPEAT PORT AU PRINCE 2016 ACTION SECSTATE 11 OCT

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT AU PRINCE 2016

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, HA

SUBJ: US/HAITI TEXTILE AGREEMENT

REFS: (A) PAUP 1942; (B) PAUP 1963; (C) PAUP 1987

1. IN SERIES OF BRIEFINGS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL TEXTILE INDUSTRY (REF B), COMMERCE SECRETARY FOURCAND HAS STRONGLY CONTENDED THAT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REPRESENTS BEST AGREEMENT HAITI COULD GET AND HAS SET FORTH THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH PROMPTED GOH TO REACH AGREEMENT ON NEW MULTI-FIBER AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, HE HAS ENCOUNTERED MORE CRITICISM THAN HE EXPECTED, MANY MANUFACTURERS FAILING TO UNDERSTAND THAT HAITI CANNOT DEMAND US KEEP ITS MARKETS OPEN TO UNRESTRICTED IMPORTS. MANY MANUFACTURERS, BOTH HAITIAN AND AMERICAN, EVIDENTLY BELIEVE AGREEMENT CAN BE "AMENDED" IF NOT RENEGOTIATED, AND ARE PUTTING

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PRESSURE ON FOURCAND TO HAVE QUOTA REVISED UPWARDS. SOME OF THOSE

WHO HAVE GRAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT IMPACT OF AGREEMENT ON HAITI'S EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY. A HAITIAN LIAISON GROUP IS ORGANIZING A DRIVE FOR RECONSIDERATION AND AMENDMENT OF AGREEMENT, WITH SUPPORT FROM US MANUFACTURERS.

2. AS USEDL AWARE FROM ITS NEGOTIATIONS HERE, MANY INDUSTRIALISTS BELIEVE, OR ASSERT, THAT PROPOSED QUOTA WILL ALLOW ONLY A FEW MONTHS' WORTH OF EXPORTS AT PRESENT RATES OF PRODUCTION; WHEN QUOTA IS EXHAUSTED, THOUSANDS OF HAITIANS WILL BE THROWN OUT OF WORK. SOME PREDICT THIS SITUATION WILL DEVELOP AS EARLY AS NEXT SPRING. SECOND CONCERN OF MANUFACTURERS IS THAT HAITI WILL LOSE ITS SEWING CONTRACTS TO THIRD COUNTRIES WITH MORE GENEROUS QUOTAS, OR WITH NO QUOTAS AT ALL. THESE ARGUMENTS, IF PRESSED HARD AND LONG ENOUGH IN CERTAIN QUARTERS, MAY LEAD FOURCAND TO GO BEYOND HIS RECENT REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL USG ASSURANCES (REF C).

3. ACTION REQUESTED: IN ANY CASE, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL (A) TO HAVE USDEL'S SUMMARY COUNTER-ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED WITH FOURCAND AVAILABLE FOR EMBASSY'S USE WITH LEADERS IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY AS APPROPRIATE, AND (B) TO CONSIDER WHETHER ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF FLEXIBILITY MIGHT BE INTRODUCED INTO AGREEMENT THAT WOULD DEFLECT THIS CRITICISM AND STRENGTHEN FOURCAND'S ABILITY TO DEFEND AGREEMENT AGAINST ITS INCREASINGLY WELL-ORGANIZED CRITICS.

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